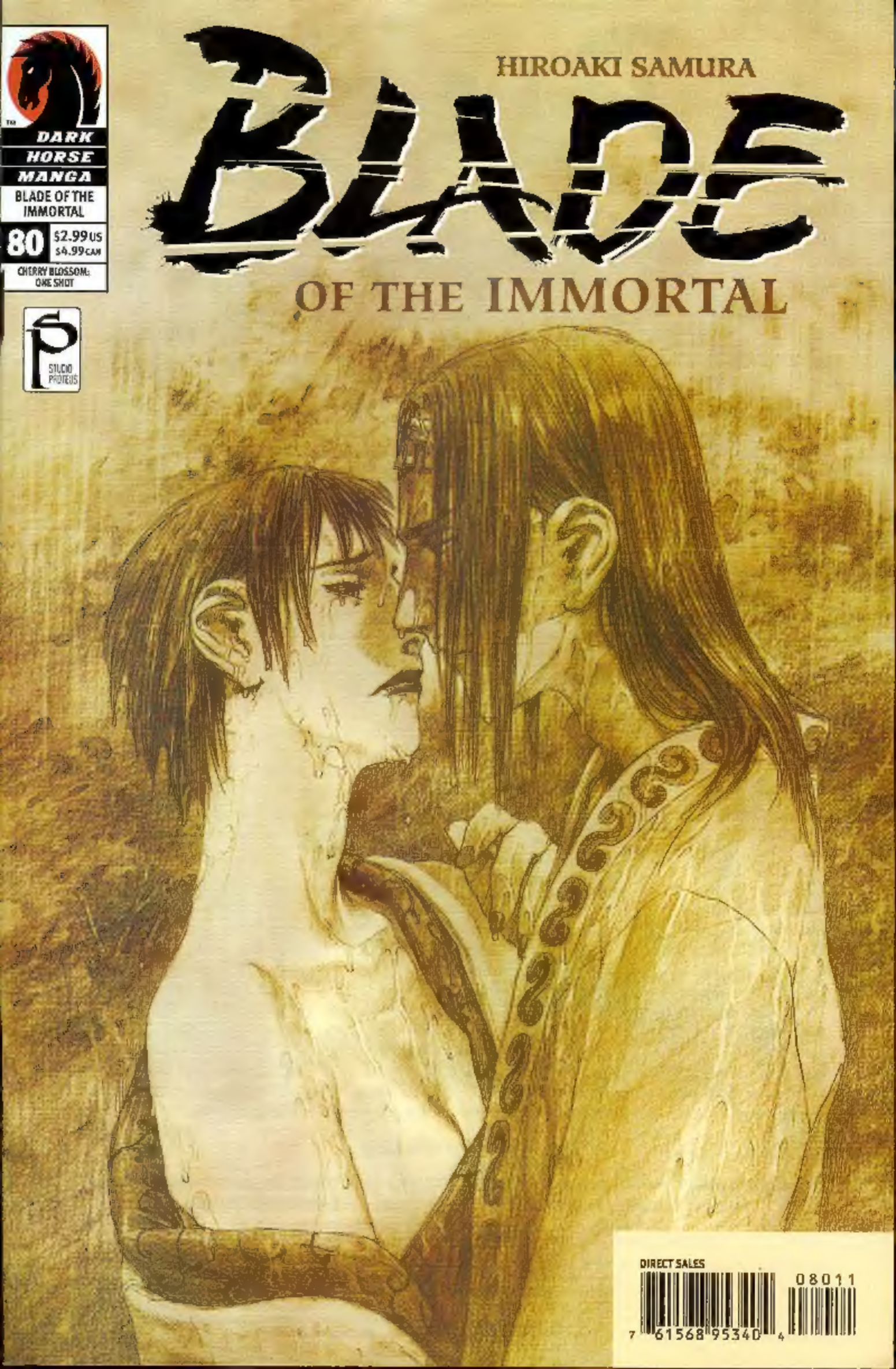
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BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

art and story by

HIROAKI SAMURA

CAST OF CHARACTERS

simhe-
Immortal Scanner

jimchi
Nice enough to distro the stuff.

THE STORY SO FAR

- Series: Blade of the Immortal
- Date: 2003.09.03
- Volume: 13?
- Chapter: 080
- Format: Left to Right
- pages: 00-27 (28 jpgs w/cover)
- Size: 7.34MB
- Source: Dark Horse Montly Issues (UPC 6156895340)
- Last Rls: BotI Issue 78

Remember to read the letters section. This time something worth reading is mentioned. About the expected ending around 2007 for the English version. WTF!?!

ENJOY!

BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

art and story by
HIROAKI SAMURA

translation by
DANA LEWIS and TOREN SMITH

lettering and retouch by
TOMOKO SAITO

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MANJI
Immortal *rōnin*.

RIN
Last heir of the Mutenichi-*ryū dojō* destroyed by Ittō-*ryū*.

ANOTSU
The leader of the Ittō-*ryū* sword school.

KENSUI
Head of the Shingyōtō-*ryū*

HISOKA
Daughter of Kensui's teacher.

THE STORY SO FAR

Infected by *kessenchu*, mystical bloodworms which can heal all wounds and grant their host immortality, Manji's bloodthirst led to the capture and murder of his sister. To atone for the 100 good people who died at his hand under his corrupted lord, Manji vowed to slay 1,000 evil men in exchange for the release of death.

Two years earlier, when her parents were murdered on her fourteenth birthday by Anotsu Kagehisa's Ittō-*ryū* swordsmen, Rin Asano became part of a mad revenge cycle which began when Anotsu's grandfather was thrown out of the Asano clan's Mutenichi-*ryū dōjō* fifty years before. A quest for vengeance was instilled in Anotsu; a similar quest now haunts Rin. Upon learning of Manji, she enlisted his aid to destroy the Ittō-*ryū* and avenge her parents.

Anotsu travelled to distant Kaga to look into a *dōjō* that might soon be part of the Ittō-*ryū*, and found more than he bargained for...marriage and jealousy! It seems he must marry into the *ryū* before they will join him, but one young samurai might not take that very well. The other students don't seem to favor this situation either. As always, trouble is brewing.

designer **DEBRA BAILEY** assistant editor **MICHAEL CARRIGLITTO** editor **TIM ERVIN-GORE** publisher **MIKE RICHARDSON**

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無限の住人

CHERRY BLOSSOM

WHERE'S IRIYA...?
HELL, WHO *KNOWS*... BET HE'S NOT COMING.
YEAH? WELL... CAN'T BLAME HIM.
NOT MUCH OF A WEDDING, HUH? NO GUESTS EXCEPT US...
...AND SOME OF THE *OLD MASTER'S* STUDENTS.

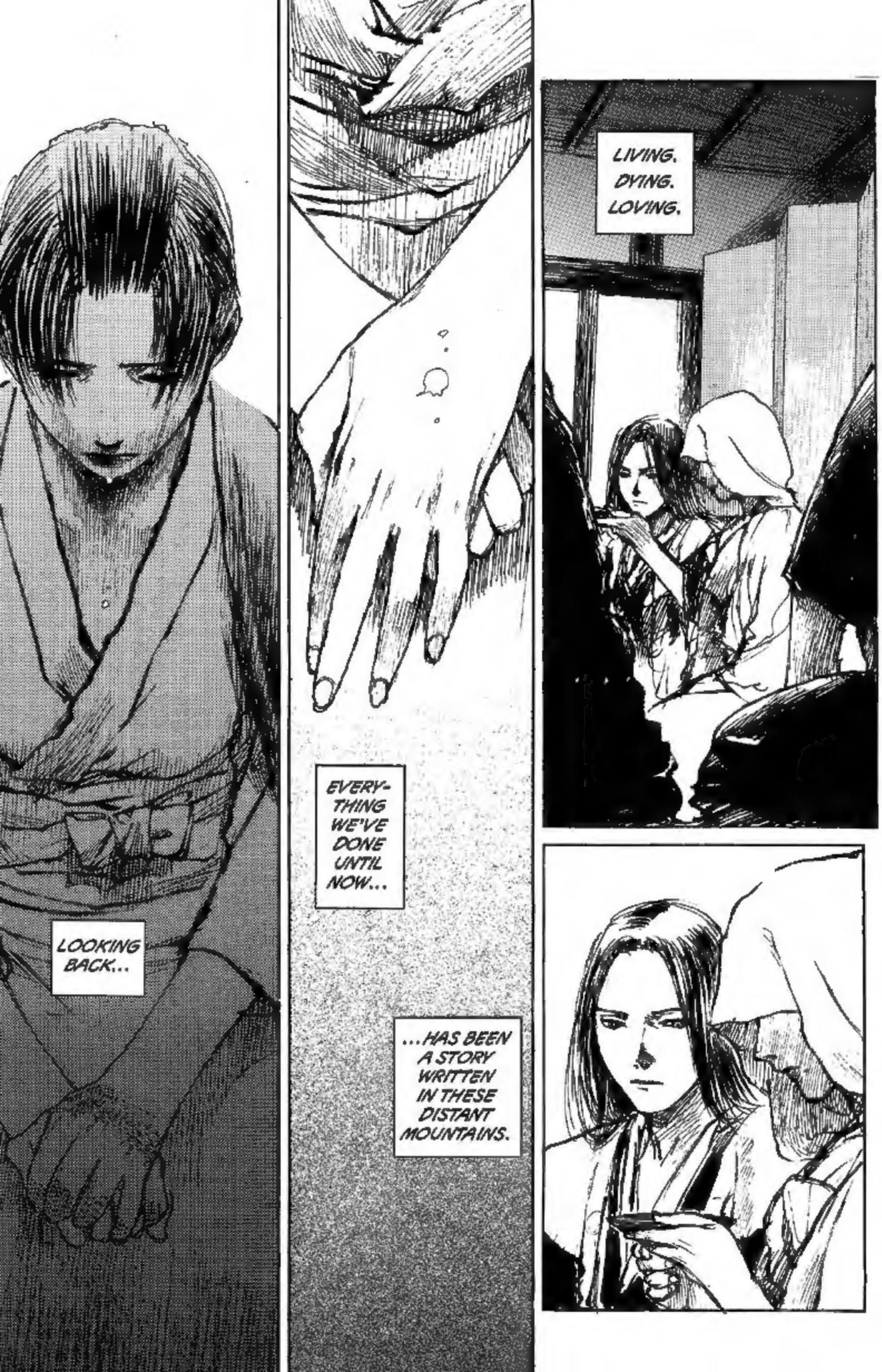
IT'S GOOD ENOUGH FOR *US*.
BACK IN EDO, HE'S GOT A THOUSAND FOLLOWERS... THAT'S WHERE THE *REAL* CELEBRATION WILL BE.
OF COURSE WE SHOULDN'T FORGET.....
...*WE'RE* HIS FOLLOW-ERS, TOO, NOW.
.....
.....
SHIT.
HISOKA...
.....

R...
REALLY...
.....
ANOTSU-
SAMA
SAID
THAT...?

WHAT
DO YOU
WISH TO
DO?

I...
I HAVE
NO
REASON
TO
REFUSE.
I'M
WILLING
TO BE...
HIS
WIFE.

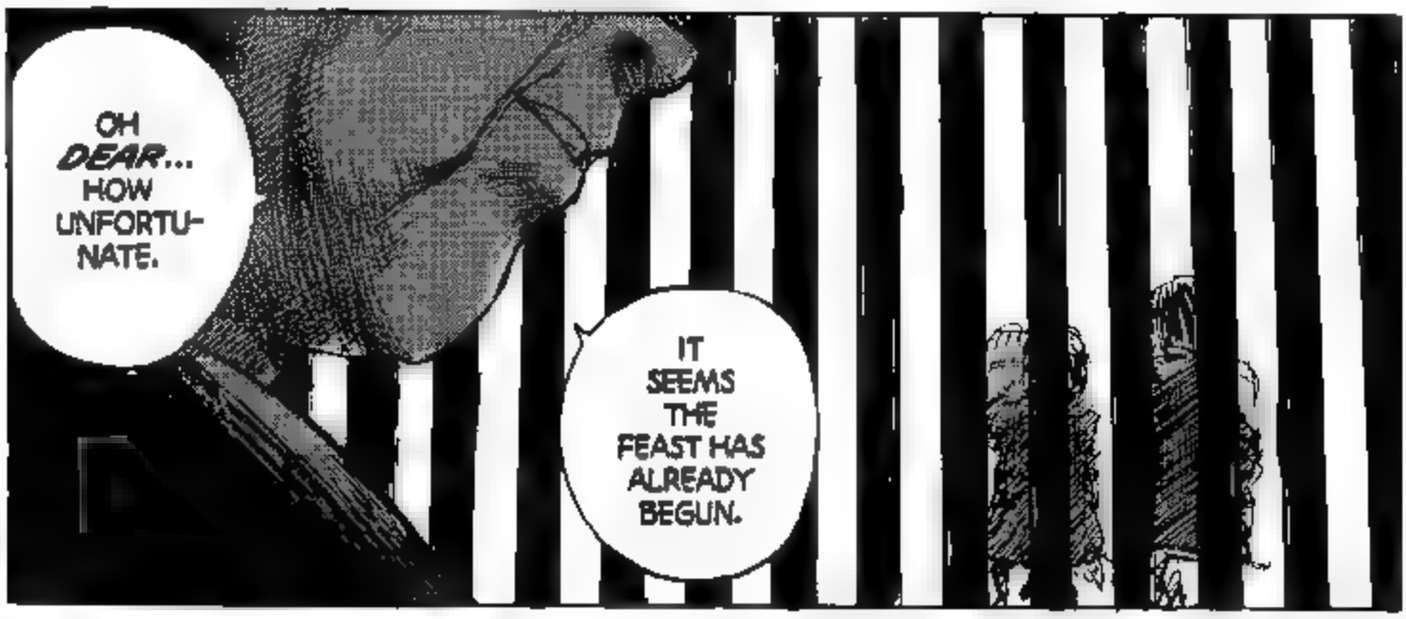
.....
.....
I SEE...
.....


LIVING.
DYING.
LOVING.
LOOKING BACK...
EVERY-THING WE'VE DONE UNTIL NOW...
...HAS BEEN A STORY WRITTEN IN THESE DISTANT MOUNTAINS.

BUT THAT ERA IS OVER NOW.
NO... IT MAY HAVE ENDED LONG, LONG AGO.
POWER SHOULD NOT BE HIDDEN. IT'S TIME TO LET THESE MEN LOOSE ON THE WORLD...
...AND PUT OUR SENSEI'S PHILOSOPHY TO THE TEST!
MAS-TER...?
A MESSENGER FROM THE GOVERN-MENT...?

HMM... WELL, IF HE'S FROM THE AUTHORITIES, I REALLY CAN'T MAKE ANY EXCUSES.
ARE YOU CERTAIN, SIR? I COULD AT LEAST ASK HIM TO COME BACK LATER...
NO, I'LL GO. KOZUE! TAKE OVER FOR ME.
HMM...? YES, SIR.
PROSS-PERITY...
IN ALLL... THINGS...
?

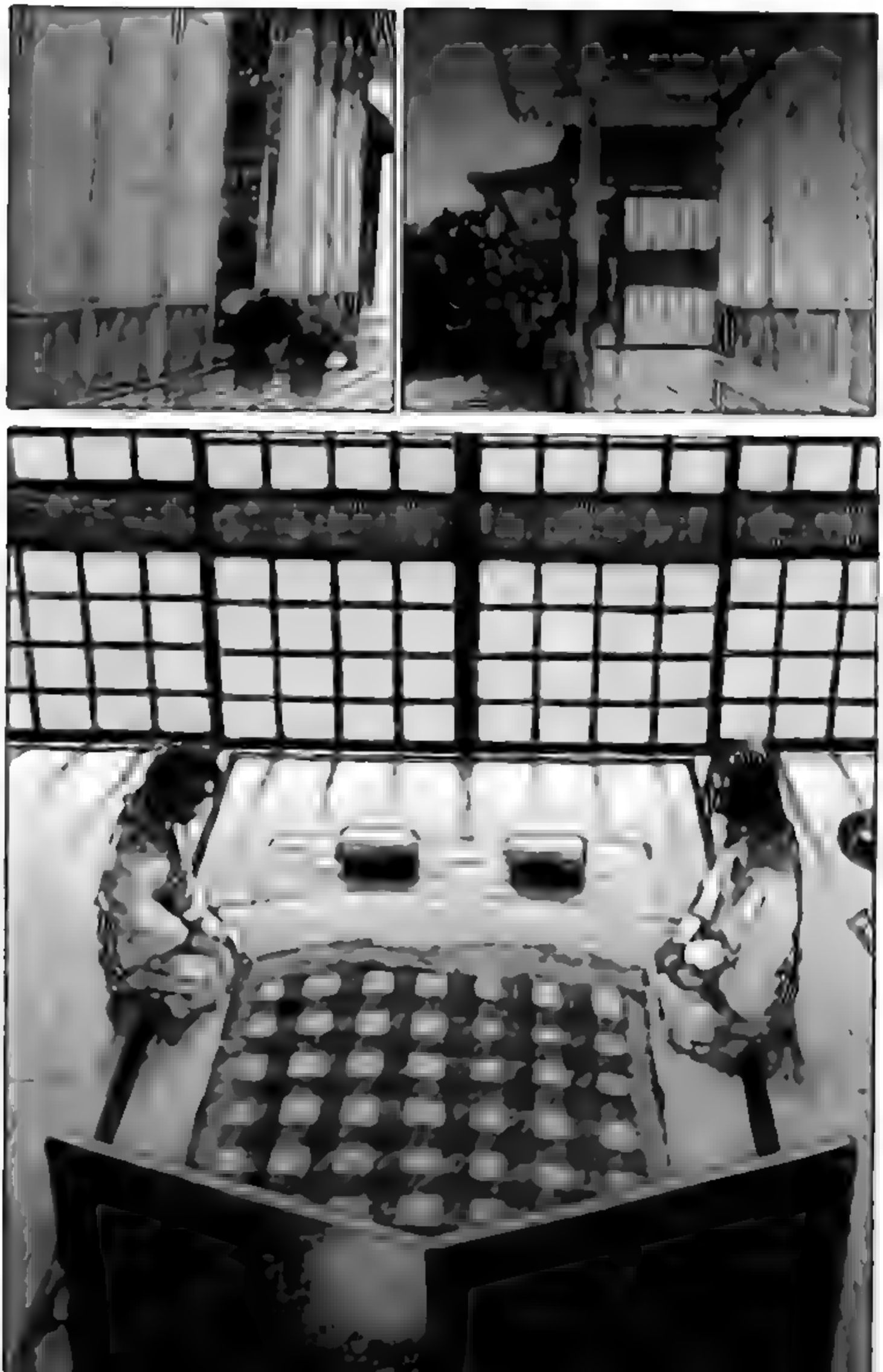
WONDER IF IT'S... OVER?
MAN... TWO WHOLE KEGS?!
DON'T GET USED TO IT.


OH *DEAR*... HOW UNFORTU-NATE.
IT SEEMS THE FEAST HAS ALREADY BEGUN.

WHAT A *RE-GRETTABLE* DUTY I'VE BEEN GIVEN...
...ON SUCH AN *AUSPI-CIOUS* DAY.

SPEAK-ING PRIVATE-LY, SIR...
...I CONSIDER IT REPRE-HENSI-BLE.
BUT THAT'S NEITHER HERE NOR THERE.
THINK DEEPLY ABOUT THIS MATTER, AND GIVE ME YOUR REPLY.
AFTER ALL, IT'S FOR THE YOUNG LADY'S GOOD, AS WELL.
NOW IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME
AH?!
PLEASE WAIT, SIR! I'LL GET A PALAN-QUIN...
HEAVENS NO! DON'T WORRY ABOUT THIS OLD MAN. GO! ENJOY YOUR FEAST!

H...
...
.....
HOW....
...HOW CAN THIS BE?!

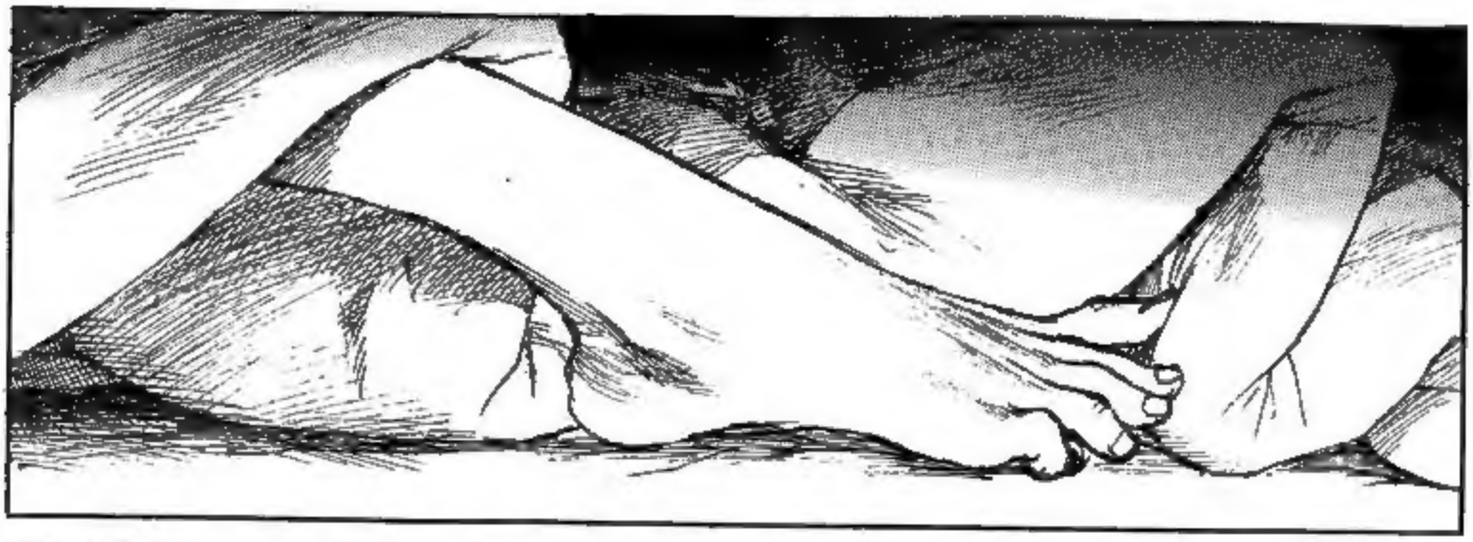


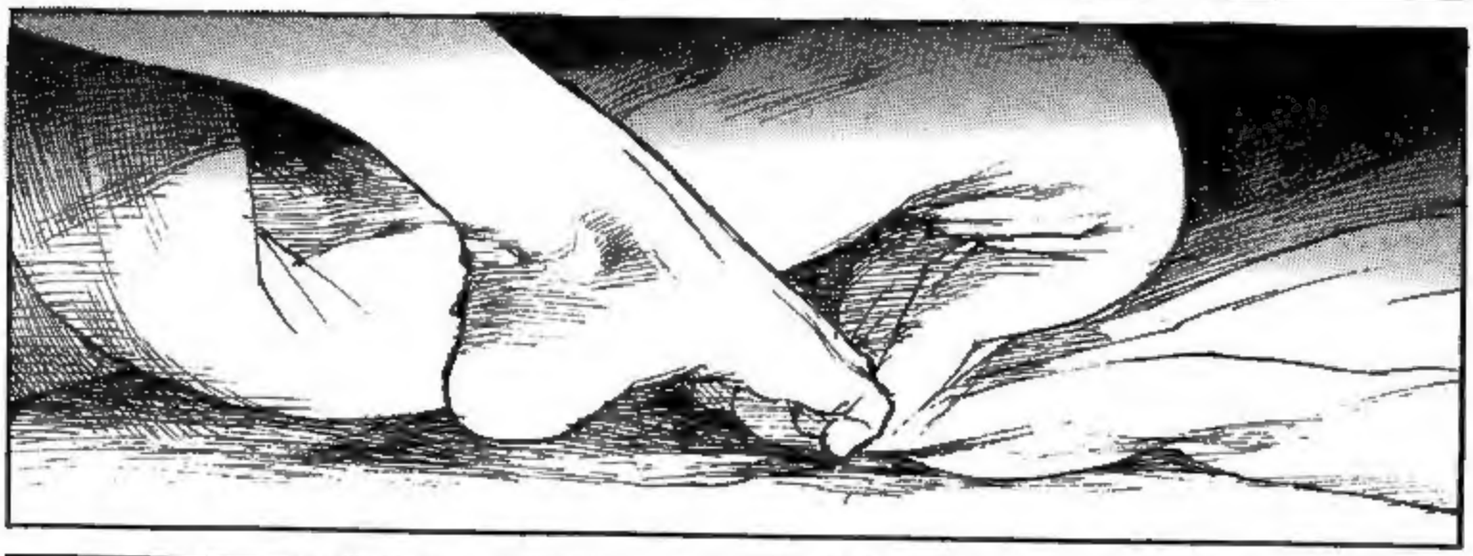
.....
ANOTSU-DONO...?
WILL YOU PLEASE PROMISE ME ONE THING...?
I INTEND TO FORGET ALL TWENTY-FOUR YEARS OF MY LIFE... AND THINK OF NOTHING EXCEPT YOU.
FOR THIS SHORT TIME JUST BEFORE US...
...WHAT IS IT, HISOKA-DONO?
AND SO... I ASK YOU, TOO.
THE FUTURE OF THE DŌJŌ... MY DEPARTED FATHER... KENSUI...

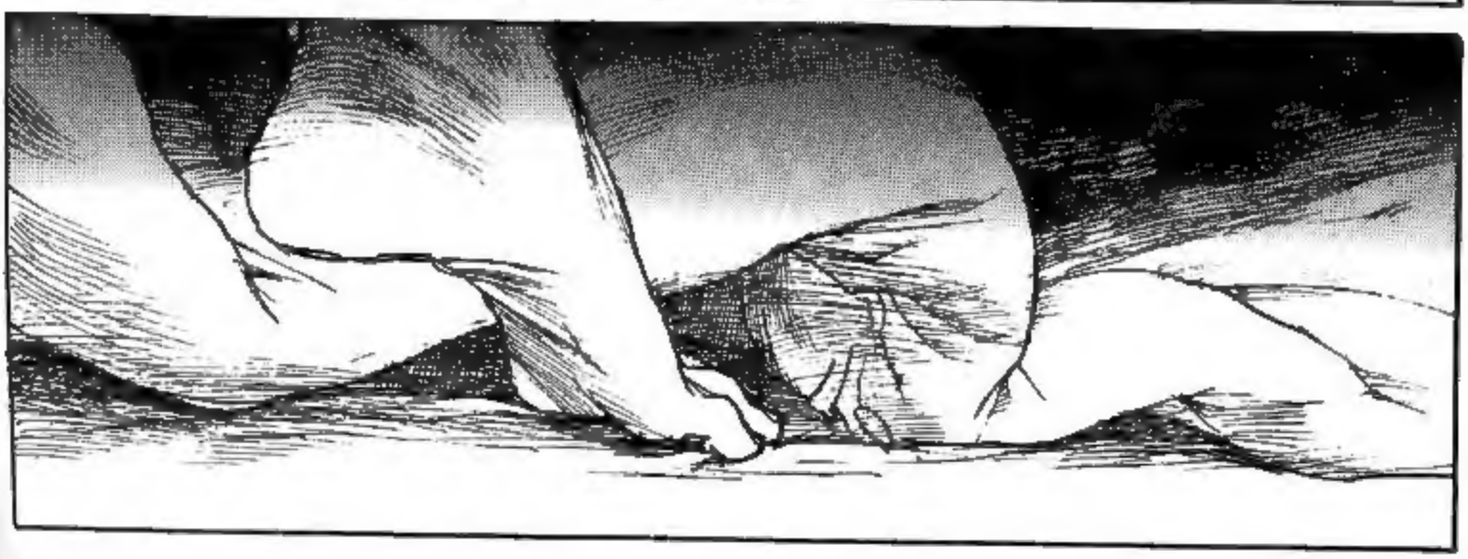
WILL YOU GIVE THESE FEW HOURS BEFORE THE MORNING SUN... TO ME ALONE?
EVEN SHOULD THERE BE... ANOTHER WOMAN IN YOUR MEMORIES.
EVEN AS WE KNEEL HERE TO-GETHER...
...IT'S NOT AS THOUGH WE'RE TWO SOULS PLEDGED IN LOVE.
I KNOW ALL TOO WELL THAT TODAY'S WEDDING WAS... CALCU-LATED.
WEIGHED ON THE SCALES OF YOUR PRIVATE LIFE, AGAINST YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO THE GREATER FAMILY OF YOUR ITTŌ-RYŪ
AND YET, I WOULD CLING TO YOU THIS ONE NIGHT. I DON'T EXPECT YOU EVER TO TRULY LOVE ME...
...FROM THE BOTTOM OF YOUR HEART...

AND YET...
.....
...YOU'RE THE FIRST MAN I'VE EVER... KNOWN.
AND SO, FOR THIS SHORT TIME...
...I WANT YOU TO FEEL THE SAME TOWARD ME. IS THAT... TOO MUCH TO ASK?
.....
I UNDER-STAND.
INDEED. THAT WAS MY INTENTION.
HOWEVER, ONE THING THAT *CONCERNS* ME... IS THAT IF I *DO* MAKE LOVE TO YOU THIS NIGHT...
...IT COULD... *OVER-BURDEN* YOUR FRAGILE BODY.
ANOTSU-*DONO*...
YOU SEE A WOMAN WHO HAS *SWORN* UPON HER *SOUL* TO MARRY THE LEADER OF THE *ITTŌ-RYŪ!*

IF I CANNOT EVEN ENDURE LOSING MY VIRGINITY...
...HOW CAN I HOPE TO SURVIVE THE STORMS THAT WILL SOON ENGULF US?
Shift
AS BEFITS THE CREED OF THE ITTŌ-RYŪ...
...TEST THE WORTHINESS OF YOUR WIFE.







TO BE CONTINUED...

LETTERS

send letters to:
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www.darkhorse.com • blade@darkhorse.com • www.studioproteus.com

What the heck is going on here? And who was that short, ugly guy? You know, when someone looks that ugly, he can't be a good guy. Well, okay, that's a dumb generalization, but the diminutive nature, mixed with his evil looks and bureaucratic demeanor combine to make quite a disagreeable guy, don't you think? At any rate, judging from Kensui's reaction, something bad is on the horizon. The good thing is that it means lots of good reading in the future. Woohooo! Okay, letters, please.

Dear Studio Proteus and Dark Horse Comics,

I'm sure you guys get this a lot, but *Blade of the Immortal* is by far the best comic book that I've ever read. I just recently finished rereading all 76 issues and it left me in true admiration. Hiroaki Samura's artwork and action sequences are so far beyond any other comic. It's amazing. I think the story Mr. Samura weaves is very deep and emotional as well. He creates some very interesting and complicated characters. Hiroaki Samura is truly in a league of his own. I also wanted to thank all of the people at Dark Horse and Studio Proteus for translating and bringing this brilliant comic book to America. I truly appreciate all the hard work and effort you put into bringing this comic to us in English. I hope you guys never stop producing this great series. Now that that's said, I have two questions that I was hoping you could answer for me.

1). Do you know how long, or how many issues, Hiroaki Samura intends to be writing and pencilling *Blade of the Immortal*? He doesn't plan on stopping any time soon, right?

2). I was wondering if there were any *Blade of the Immortal* posters that could be purchased? Posters would be really sweet to have!!

Well, thanks for your time and thank you for bringing us this outstanding comic.

Matt Durand
Southington, CT
via email

Thanks Matt. And this might sound funny, but what a delight to get a letter from America! Ha ha. I know that sounds silly, but most of our correspondence comes from around the globe, and very little from here in the good (not so) ol' US of A. Now, to answer your questions:

1). According to interviews, Samura-*sama* wanted to finish *Mugen no Juunin* (the Japanese title of *Blade of the Immortal*) in five volumes. So far in Japan he's up to something like fifteen. In one interview, which took place in August of 2001, Samura stated that he wanted to be finished in three years, which means 2004, which is soon. However, over here in America, we're currently publishing material that initially saw print in 2000, so, we'll probably reach the end of the series sometime around 2007, unless Samura just can't find a way to end it, which would probably make you happy.

2). My favorite *Blade of the Immortal* posters are printed by 1000 Editions in Spain. Super high quality, great choice of images. Check them out at *http://www.1000editions.com/index_bi.html*.

Hello!

I know that you publish *Blade of the Immortal* (good job by the way) and I have looked for a really really long time now to see how tall and such Rin Asano is (a character

***The Deadly Duo* by Graeme Halliday of Dundee, Scotland.**

in that manga). I found only that she might be "around five feet tall, and around 100 lbs." I was wondering if you might be able to fill out the remaining places on the list below. I would like to make a really good *Blade of the Immortal* site, that has things others do not. And I need it for her costume, for the next anime con.

Name: Asano, Rin.
Height: ?
Weight: ?
Age: 16
Weapons: Sword, and sixteen small knives (golden wasps).

Thank you for your time, and I hope you can fulfill this. Have a nice and fulfilling day!

Fuji Nagase Inuzuka
via e-mail

Okay, friends of *Blade of the Immortal*, I couldn't answer Inuzuka's questions, so I'm appealing to you to drum up some answers. And make it quick, because by the time you get this, convention season will be...over actually. Darn it. But the good thing is, conventions happen every year! We'll have the information for next year. However, I hope no one will attempt to change their height or weight to get their costume to be exactly right. That doesn't sound healthy. Remember people, just because Rin has been eating roots straight from the dirt, that doesn't mean you should do the same! Okay?

Dear Dark Horse,

I'm writing all the way from bonnie Scotland **(see what I was saying about those international letters? – T)** to tell you what a great job you've been doing on the manga scene. First of all, I only started reading *Blade of the Immortal* at issue #62, but I enjoyed what I read and the artwork's brilliant. I like the sketchy feel Samura uses, but apart from that, I'm so lucky to have a decent comic book shop in Scotland to find this brilliant comic. I'm also looking forward to *Ghost in the Shell 2*.

Anyway, please keep up the good work so we folks in Scotland can read this great comic. I've started collecting the trade paperbacks, too!

Och aye!
Graeme Halliday
Dundee, Scotland
via actual written-on-paper mail

Hey Graeme, thanks for the mad props, yo! Okay, enough of that. Seriously, thanks! It's good to know you've got some decent comics up there in the land of peat bogs and other stereotypes about the "Isles" that we foolish Americans throw around like...peat moss!

Oh, and here's your art, Graeme. I hope your friends in art school appreciate that you are now an actual published artist! Good work!

Love and kisses,
—TimEG

ABOUT THE SWASTIKA

The main character in *Blade of the Immortal*, Manji, has taken the "crux gammata" as both his name and his personal symbol. This symbol is also known as the *swastika*, a name derived from the Sanskrit *svastika* (meaning "welfare," from *su* — "well" + *asti* "he is"). As a symbol of prosperity and good fortune, the swastika was widely used throughout the ancient world (for example, appearing often on Mesopotamian coinage), including North and South America and has been used in Japan as a symbol of Buddhism since ancient times. To be precise, the symbol generally used by Japanese Buddhists is the *sauvastika*, which moves in a counter-clockwise direction, and is called the *manji* in Japanese. The *sauvastika* generally stands for night, and often for magical practices. The *swastika*, whose arms point in a clockwise direction, is generally considered a solar symbol. It was this version (the *hakenkreuz*) that was perverted by the Nazis. It is important that readers understand that the swastika has ancient and honorable origins and it is those that apply to this story, which takes place in the 18th century (ca. 1782-3). *There is no anti-Semitic or pro-Nazi meaning behind the use of the symbol in this story. Those meanings did not exist until after 1910.*

ABOUT THE TRANSLATION

The Artwork: The author of *Blade of the Immortal* requested that we make an effort to avoid mirror-imaging his artwork. Normally, all of our manga are first copied in a mirror-image in order to facilitate the left-to-right reading of the pages. However, Mr. Samura decided that he would rather see his pages reversed via the technique of cutting up the panels and repasting them in reverse order. While we feel that this often leads to problems in panel-to-panel continuity, we place primary importance on the wishes of the creator. Therefore, most of *Blade of the Immortal* has been produced using the "cut and paste" technique. There are, of course, some sequences where it was impossible to do this, and mirror-imaged panels or pages were used instead.

The Sound Effects & Dialogue: Since some of Mr. Samura's sound effects are integral parts of the artwork, the decision was made to leave those in their original Japanese. When it was crucial to the understanding of the panel that the sound effect be in English, however, Mr. Samura chose to redraw the panel. We hope readers will view the unretouched sound effects as essential portions of Mr. Samura's extraordinary artwork. In addition, Mr. Samura's treatment of dialogue is quite different from that featured in average samurai manga and is considered to be one of the things that has made *Blade* such a huge hit in Japan. Mr. Samura has mixed a variety of linguistic styles in this fantasy story, where some characters speak in the mannered style of old Japan, while others speak as if they were street-corner punks from a bad area of modern-day Tokyo. The anachronistic slang used by some of the characters in the English translation reflects the unusual mix of speech patterns from the original Japanese text.

NEXT ISSUE:
"Shadows"